

3.

UNANIMITY THE BEST DEFENCE OF
RELIGIOUS AND CIVIL LIBERTY.

A
SERMON,
PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH
OF
ST. ANDREW, HOLBORN,
ON
SUNDAY, April 29th, 1798.

By HENRY GEORGE WATKINS, A. M.

— K
JOINT CURATE OF THE SAID PARISH, LECTURER OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW THE GREAT, AND EVENING PREACHER
AT ST. DUNSTAN'S IN THE WEST.

Si concordēs fueritis, validi invictique manebitis; contra, si diffidūs et seditione distrabimini, imbecilles eritis, et expugnati faciles.

LONDON:

Printed for F. and C. RIVINGTON, No. 62, St. Paul's Church Yard;
ANDERSON, Holborn Hill; and BATEMAN,
Devonshire Street, Queen's Square.

1798.

17

EXAMINER THE BEST DEGREE OF

REMARKS AND CONCLUSIONS.

STERMON

PREPARED IN THE PARISH OF RICH

ST. ANDREW, HOBSON, 1798.



THE CHURCH OF ST. ANDREW, HOBSON, 1798.

THE CHURCH OF ST. ANDREW, HOBSON, 1798.

THE CHURCH OF ST. ANDREW, HOBSON, 1798.

THE CHURCH OF ST. ANDREW, HOBSON, 1798.

THE CHURCH OF ST. ANDREW, HOBSON, 1798.

LONDON.

Printed by T. and C. Richardson, No. 1, St. Paul's Churchyard;

Anderson, Hobson Hill; and B. and

Doverhill Street, Queen's Square.

1798.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Author had not the least expectation of making the following Sermon publick, otherwise than by it's delivery from the pulpit; and had not the subject required *immediate* recommendation, it might have been discussed in a better method. He should *have resisted* the request of some of his hearers, to send it forth in the present form, had he not felt it his duty, at this crisis, to do what he was able for the promotion of unanimity, in defence of our religious and civil liberty. How far it was proper for the Author to comply with the well-meant request of his friends, must be determined not by the critical acumen, but by the candid judgment, of the Reader.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The Author had not the least expectation of
receiving the following gentleman's notice, otherwise
than by its delivery from the press, and had not
the subject required no more than a recommendation,
it might have been discussed in a better method.
He should have yielded the subject of some of his
masters to lead it forth in the present form, had
he not felt it his duty, as this calls, to do what
he was able for the promotion of unanimity, in
defense of our religious and civil liberty. How
far it was proper for the Author to comply
with the well-meant request of his friends, and
be determined not by the critical acumen, but
by the candid judgment of the Reader.

TO THE
INHABITANTS
OF THE
PARISH OF ST. ANDREW, HOLBORN,
THIS SERMON,
PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,
IS MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,
BY THEIR SINCERE WELL-WISHER,
THE AUTHOR.

7

TO THE

INHABITANTS

OF THE

PARISH OF ST. ANDREW, HOLBORN.

THIS SERMON

PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST.

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

BY THEIR SINCERE WELL-WISHERS,

THE AUTHOR.

A

S E R M O N.

MARK iii. 24.

IF A KINGDOM BE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF,
THAT KINGDOM CANNOT STAND.

THE reasoning powers of our Saviour were wonderful:—his enemies themselves being judges. When certain persons were sent by the Sanhedrim to apprehend him, they returned and exclaimed, “Never man spake like this man.” A striking instance of his ability to detect and to confound his adversaries, is found in this chapter. A company of Jewish scribes, who came down from Jerusalem, most probably to counteract the spreading fame of Jesus, for want of a better argument,

B

gument, said, "He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils." No assertion could more prove their inveterate malice, or their consummate ignorance. To suppose that Christ supported the credit, and obtained the belief, of those doctrines, which when embraced tend to the overthrow of Satan's kingdom by the help of Satan himself, is a supposition of which a child of ordinary capacity might see the absurdity.

Our Saviour well knew their murmurings, and the unreasonable method they took to undermine his influence on the common people, and to remove, if possible, their own convictions.

Desirous to impress other sentiments on their minds respecting himself, and to improve the circumstance, our Lord called them unto him, and said unto them, by parables and metaphors, "How can Satan cast out Satan?"—and, "*if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand;*"—and if a house, a family, be
divided

divided against itself, the respectability and comfort of that family cannot continue.

Satan has too much knowledge to assist in dividing the kingdom of evil over which he is permitted to rule. Infernal spirits, though they themselves seek rest and find none, yet are they always disposed to make profelytes to sin, and to lead men into embarrassments and vices in this world, and to misery in the next. Nothing but the almighty power of God holds Satan in subjection, and curbs his malice; nothing but the gracious interposition of God can effectually say, "hitherto shalt thou go, and no further; and here thy proud waves shall be stayed."

Unreasonable as it may be, to suppose, that Jesus Christ, whose professed object in this world was to destroy the works of the devil, should be assisted in his miracles by that enemy to man; yet equally far from honesty, from reason, from common sense, and from the suggestions of their own consciences, do many talk, who are desirous

by all means and at all hazards to oppose the Gospel of Jesus.—But Christians may congratulate themselves on the *stability* of this glorious Gospel of the blessed God—the foundation standeth sure. *Solid* sense, and *true* philosophy, are still the accompaniments of genuine faith and sincere holiness. Though evil spirits are ever in compact, to support their own dominion, to discomfit the Church of Christ, and, if it were possible, to destroy it; yet have we the promise of the Almighty Founder of it, that the gates of hell, i. e. neither the power, nor the policy, of sinners, shall prevail against it. The *kingdom of Christ* is that which shall never be destroyed. But wherein consists the indestructibility of this kingdom?—It is a community of principle. None are subjects of that kingdom of Christ, but those over whose hearts, lives, tempers, and conduct, the Gospel of Christ has an *efficacious and prevailing influence*.

The

The leading features of true Christianity are such as these:—sincere love to our Lord Jesus Christ; grateful acceptance of the atonement he hath made for sin; diligent search for redemption, through his blood; the forgiveness of our personal sins, according to the riches of his grace;—fervent prayer for the aid of God's Holy Spirit to direct, govern, and sanctify the true Christian in this state of infirmity, till he arrive at the perfection of stability and of bliss, in the everlasting kingdom of God. This is a system which *will* never, *can* never be destroyed, so long as Christ reigns king of kings and lord of lords, and that will be for ever and ever. These few features which I have delineated, may be also called the *radicals* of Gospel religion; they are unconnected with this world, except only as they necessarily produce the fruits of righteousness to the praise of God. It is this *identity* of Christianity which is indissoluble, and which passes unimpaired through all the forms and customs, ceremonies,

ceremonies, and even superstitions, with which it may be attended in various states of the world. Love to Christ—faith in his all-sufficient merits—desire and endeavour to honour his holy name and word—and a blessed hope of everlasting life—these form, as it were, *the soul* of Godliness, and pass improved from the chamber of the dying man, to the mansion in our heavenly Father's house. Sabbaths and public ordinances of religion, however plain or however ornamented, are but the visible *bodily* part of it, adapted only, by the providence and grace of God, for present circumstances in the present world; and this part of religion, sacred and useful as it is, is so connected with the prevailing motives and practices of this world, that through the cunning craftiness of sinful men, it *may be* distracted, diminished, destroyed!

This is the *kingdom* which may be divided against itself—which has been, and now is, awfully divided against itself. In the present state
much

much evil is mingled with what is good. Our own sins and the vices of others tend greatly to weaken the bands of religious influence. The laxity of religious opinion, which hath of late been much encouraged, on the one hand; and the bigotted, prejudiced, and contracted views which some take of the Gospel, on the other, have *strangely divided the* Christian interest against itself in this island.—*The one* extreme, which considers men of the most discordant religious principles equally partakers of the promises made to the followers of Christ, reduces religion itself to nothing; *and the other*, which excludes all from Christian blessings whose religious opinions and expressions do not exactly coincide with the measure of their partial sentiments, reduces the *number of Christians* to the men of their own sect; and by these means, the outward and visible Church of Christ, which like his seamless coat should be one society, is weakened,

and becomes less successful in its opposition to the enemies of Christ and of Christians.

My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Though real godliness be the same *identical individual* thing, in every age and country; yet the public profession of it, and the public worship of God, may be suspended, or at least endangered, by a supine and regardless spirit.

Often have the judgments of God fallen upon whole Churches, when they have in the general departed from his *faith and fear*. These are so many *cautions* to us, lest the same causes should produce the same consequences in our religious hemisphere. These afford so *many motives*—to be zealous for the honour of God, in discountenancing irreligious and vicious habits and practices, those destructive vultures which prey upon our national comfort and stability—to animate all who regard Christ's religion, and find it a source of happiness—to excite mutual charity and forbearance towards each other—to think
well

well and speak well of *all* that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.—Then would the various *denominations* of Christian Churches no longer be considered as one kingdom divided against itself, but the unavoidable effect of the difference of temper and circumstance incident to the present state.—The Catholic, i. e. the Universal Church, would then be a name and a praise in the earth; and the *power of Satan*, or his emissaries, even in this respect, could not prevail against it.

If all true Christians, who agree in the *essentials* of Christ's religion, would but give place more than they do to each other, on the mere circumstantials of it;—if fewer men were found, who substitute party prejudices for the principles and practice of godliness;—if all the Christian Churches in England were as an house *at unity* in itself;—how much would the general interests of holiness flourish? and we might expect that the Lord of the Earth would continue to pour
down

down his blessing upon us.—If the fear of God rule in our hearts as a people, that will be the bond of peace and of all virtues. There is then nothing else we need to fear: because *that principle* will make us to value and to improve the privileges we have so long enjoyed; it will make us to prefer the bright and steady light of Divine Revelation to the ignes fatui of human presumption; it will make us to use with cheerfulness whatever means God hath put in our power to oppose those who vilify his worship; and it will cheer our hearts, in present circumstances, because attended by the consideration, that “the battle is not our’s, but God’s.”

May the judgements which hang over our land be the means of teaching us righteousness! May they be the means of stimulating a *lukewarm, backsliding nation* to a sense of their duty, as members of civil society, as rational creatures, as immortal beings, as professed Christians!—So long as God sees fit to continue this burthen upon
us,

us, may it prove a wholesome and an efficacious medicine, to revive the debilitated morality of the land. The fear of the Lord will be our best confidence; and may the threats of our enemies be the effectual mean of leading us to Him who hath broken, and whose hand alone *can* bind up; who hath wounded, and whose hand *can* make whole.

Whether the lowering cloud be permitted to burst over this island, or whether the providence of God make use of a revived unanimity among ourselves, as the instrument of dispersing it—in either case we hope it will have a profitable effect on our morals and our hearts: then will it be one of those dispensations, which, though for the present it be grievous, will in the end work essentially for our good.

Had I not topics more befitting the sanctity of the sabbath, and the solemnity of this house of prayer, I might enumerate many civil and political blessings, which we of this land have long enjoyed,

enjoyed, and do *now* enjoy; I might for once be indulged in stepping aside from the usual tract, for which the present crisis of public affairs would be a sufficient apology. I might say to the warmest advocates for *modern liberty*, in opposition to our present enjoyments, where are equal and steady laws? where is the best bond of freedom—Trial by jury? These may have a sort of growth in some foreign countries; but they now flourish in, and may be called the natives of, the British soil. Contrast these with the oppression and tyranny of a neighbouring state, made only tolerable because dignified by the appellation of Illumination and Liberty; names disgraced by their application. And shall we, as wise men, part with the substance, that we may catch the shadow? for, though by some mental illusion it may seem more enlarged, remember the whole is but a shadow. I might also say, our real liberties, our just laws, our very existence as an independent nation, are at stake; and depend, under
 God,

God, on the issue of the present contest. What is Holland? what is Rome, Venice, Geneva? What is Spain? Look at these states, which have been fraternized by France; she seeks not their alliance, but their humiliation. They are but provinces under her controul: their money, their soldiers, are put in her power, and she uses both with undissembled freedom. She wishes to have the management of *our* councils, our armies, and our fleets; she wishes to subjugate us; and what she means by giving liberty, is, to form *an universal sovereignty*, and that the edicts of Paris should be recognized by the whole world. She would make her capital the seat of universal empire, and the emporium of the whole earth—I might say, robbery and plunder (under the specious name of indemnification) is her object.—I might say, her demands upon us will be ruinous to our manufactures and commerce, if we tamely suffer them to be exacted—a circumstance deserving the consideration

sideration as much of the labouring classes as of the opulent orders of society.

I might further say, that the hopes of France are founded not on her public efforts, so much as on her insidious policy.—Her aim is to realize the axiom in the text—though she blasphemes the authority on which it was spoken.—She watches for some internal dissention among ourselves. Her hopes are founded on the vice, the ignorance, the disloyalty, which her imagination and her wishes enormously magnify.—The few who apologize for our enemies, and labour to screen their excesses, manifest, if not the grossest ignorance, the most malicious intentions. Such seem to have no objection that the same tragedies should be repeated on the theatre of Britain, which would then for ever cease to deserve the epithet of *Great*. No man more than myself values liberty; but, as a Christian, I only wish so much of it as is consistent with the welfare and happiness of all my neighbours, who have as much right to be free as myself;

myself; and every candid man must allow that the laws of the land, as to their protection, and as to their penalties, attach themselves equally to every order of the state; and this is all the *equality* which society, consistent with reason, with its general welfare, and with its very existence, can admit.

But on these topics I shall not enlarge, because I would wish to recur to what I have already laid down, the necessity of unanimity upon a higher account—the defence of our *Bible*, our *Sabbaths*, the *profession* and exercise of *Religion*, as well what is tolerated as what is established. These are menaced by our enemies abroad; the downfall of these hath been malignantly prophesied of by the friends of infidelity at home. To divide an interest against itself, is the way to overthrow it: so said our Lord in the words of the text: and may it be our wisdom, at this awful crisis, seriously to consider, that “It is concord which
“encreases

“ encreases small things, and it is discord which
 “ diminishes great ones.”

We thank God, that, *as a nation*, we have not cast off his faith and fear. We have provision for the preservation of a religion but decently ceremonious, and whose doctrines are derived from a literal sense of the word of God: but for such an establishment, many villages in this land would be totally destitute of the knowledge of God, and without a teaching minister. The care for God's worship is, as it ought to be, the first and chief concern with him, who is appointed by the providence of God to rule over us. The Scriptures are properly made the basis of the law; and to maintain the respect and veneration of those Scriptures, is the highest honour, as well as the bounden duty of the magistrate.

We wish all magistrates to rule in the fear of God; we wish all ministers of religion to act consistently with the solemn account they must one day give; we wish all people to support the
 well

well meant endeavours of their magistrates, and their ministers ; and, as far as their influence may be useful, to strengthen their hands in the work of their God, and for the good of their brethren. Indeed, were this to be universally the case, our country would be invincible. But though we lament great laxity, both as to religious principle and godly practice, yet we hope and believe there are multitudes who sigh for the abominations in the land, and entreat “ that God would “ spare his people, and not give them over to reproach, that the *heathen* should rule over them.” Considering the iniquity which abounds, and the blessings we enjoy, whatever some may think, we have competent cause to say of this land, “ Happy “ art thou, O Israel, a people favoured of the “ Lord.”

We call ourselves a Christian nation, and individually we are called Christians ; but if we profess that we know God, let us be careful that we do not in works deny him, for this is dividing

Christ's visible church against itself.—If we profess that we are disciples of Christ, let us, as we ought, search the Scriptures, for in them we have “the record of eternal life, and they are they which testify of him.” That book will instruct the ignorant, and comfort the afflicted; it will refer us to the Great First Cause of all things; and it will lead us to the end and crown of all—the eternal salvation of our souls. The more it is seriously studied, the more highly shall we esteem it “as a light shining in a dark place,” till the day of eternal illumination dawn upon our unembodied spirits.

We profess that the observance of the *Christian Sabbath* is a duty of *indispensible* obligation, but our *public roads* on that day might make a stranger to exclaim—“surely the fear of God cannot be in this place!” The pursuit of our pleasures on that holy day is not a sin against our own souls only, but it is a deprivation to many servants of the common *right*, which all men have,

to

to a day of rest and religious instruction. We place the temptation of gain in their way; and it is a temptation which few will resist, who are not Christians indeed. Others are also led away by the *example* of the wealthy; and the sabbath, instead of being occupied as a day wherein, more especially, the will of God may be learned, and our souls prepared for an eternal sabbath, is a day of riot and pleasure; and hence it is, that the ministers of religion are discouraged, our churches are almost deserted, and our prisons are completely occupied. Is not this inconsistency of practice with professed principle—dividing the visible *kingdom of Christ* against itself?—and ought we not to unite, by an exemplary conduct, to discountenance and suppress the dishonour which God receives on the very day he hath set apart for the good of man? Unbelievers take occasion to argue against the Gospel, from the conduct of nominal Christians, over whom the Gospel has no sort of influence. This is a very

unfair method with them, but it should be a very serious consideration with us.

Gratitude also, to our God, imperiously demands a vigorous unanimity in our opposition to an increased importation of ungodly principles and licentious conduct. Recollect what God has done for our island: he so far honoured us, as to make us a chief instrument in the *Reformation* of Religion; so that from us founded forth the pure word of the Lord to many parts of the world. Recollect—when a force, called invincible, was sent to oppose our progress in that good work of our God, he was a wall of fire round about us, because his glory was seen among us.—Our countrymen feared not to die in defence of the Protestant faith—one pillar of which is the free and constant use of the word of God. And shall we forget the mercies we have ever since experienced? Shall we not join with our hearts, and by our practice, as one man, to hand down to our posterity, the public profession of that holy Religion,

Religion, which hath given birth to the liberties, and the comforts we enjoy? Shall we not be zealous for the honour of the God who made us? Zealous to maintain the revelation of his will which he hath given us? Zealous to preserve and study the book, whose promises alone can illumine the gloomy path of death, and manifest, that it leads to everlasting life? Can the only dignity of man, his immortal felicity—can the only safety of man, his affiance in Christ, and prayer for salvation through his grace—be of no importance to us? Are they not blessings, which cannot be lost without the most direful consequences?

Are we then to sleep while the enemy is sowing tares? Are we to be indifferent while the storm is gathering around us? Are we to be supine and careless, till we lose what we might never find again, as a nation, though many, like Esau, who sold his birthright, might desire it “earnestly with tears?” Are we to listen to those who are declaiming against public men, without

making any allowance for public difficulties? Are the private affairs of such which are completely under their own eye, totally faultless? Is there nothing in *their* families, in *their* shops, which might be conducted better? Why should such then unreasonably expect *that perfection* on an immensely large scale, which they cannot produce in a very confined circle?—The fact is, while they talk *of liberty*, they themselves are the *servants* of vice.

Let us not be deceived by specious names. The analysis of observation hath proved, that the irreligion, the profaneness, the discontent, the lewdness, the brutality, the ill temper, the abuse, and the ridicule, of a certain class of men, when *molten together* in the furnace of popular discord, burst forth in a fiery and destructive torrent, and become the misshapen idol, Modern Liberty.—*An idol* of this exact composition is what all people, nations, and languages, are commanded by France to worship.—To set up this monster on
the

the ruins of Christ's religion, seventy years have been employed on the continent by scoffers at the Gospel, in distributing their destructive wit. Though *we* may be threatened and menaced by its votaries, if we will not offer our religion and our laws on its unhallowed altar; may we, by our actions, reply, as the three Babylonian worthies did—"Our *God*, whom we serve, is able to deliver us out of thine hand."

May unanimity in defending our religious and civil liberties, characterize the heart of every Briton; and, while we unite in all vigorous exertions, may we raise our hearts to the God of all mercy, for his blessing on our endeavours—that our councils, our hearts, and our hands, may be properly directed—and then "we shall be of good courage, and play the men for the cities of our God, and for our people." Whatever we find in our hand to do, let us do it with all our might; and we have every reason to hope that the Lord
of

of Hosts will yet be with us, that the God of Jacob will yet be our refuge, and that we shall see our Jerusalem in prosperity all our life long—
For if God be for us, who can be against us!

FINIS

May unanimity in defending our religion and

civil liberties, characterize the heart of every

Englishman; and while we unite in all vigorous exertions,

may we raise our hearts to the God of all

power, for his blessing on our endeavours—that

our councils, our hearts, and hands, may be

unanimously directed—and that the issue of good

may be, and may the men of the spirit of our

land, and for our people." Whatever we find in

our hands to do, let us do it with all our might;

and we have every reason to hope that the Lord

of

